

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

SUMMER 2016

Date: June 15, 2016, Hamilton, MT (U.S. Forest Service Supervisor's Office)

Attendees: Karin Boyd, Terry Chute, Chuck Dalby, Senator Jedediah Hinkle, Michael Johns, Alan Johnstone, Clint Peck, Meriweather Schroeder-Smith, Bill Semmens (phone), Jim Stone, Representative Jeffrey Welborn, Bill Wichers, Joseph Willauer, Nancy Winslow

FWP staff: Michelle McGree, Bruce Rich, Jannice Richardson

Applicants and others in attendance: Michael Bias, Dave Moser, Matt Jaeger, Anne Tews (phone), Jonathan Ferree (phone), Ryen Neudecker, Carol Endicott (phone), Rob Roberts, Clint Sestrich (phone), Stan Bradshaw

Panel business:

Agenda was approved, and Future Fisheries balances and staff recommendations were dispersed as necessary.

Future Fisheries balances as of 06/16/2016

\$'s Available (unexpended and uncommitted)

RIT \$ (native species): \$377,955.56

License \$ (General Future Fisheries Program): \$82,847.72

Grand Total \$ available: \$450,803.28*

**This session is the third of four funding cycles within the biennium. The panel's objective is to find the best use of limited Program funds.*

Michelle McGree asked if the panel needed to revisit the \$1.50 fencing recommendation and the panel agreed that the amount was still valid. Michelle also gave a brief overview of the funding sources for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program and how it appears to be independent of changes in energy production.

Application discussions and funding recommendations:

- 1) **Big Hole River fencing project** (018-2016). The Big Hole River Big Spring Creek (Silver Bow County) supports populations of Arctic Grayling, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, and Mountain Whitefish. On a 1.1 mile (privately owned) section of the Big Hole River, two miles west of Dewey, the applicant proposes to construct a 4-strand, wildlife-friendly, riparian fence. Although water sources for livestock are available off-stream, they also propose two water breaks. The intent of the project is to manage grazing and promote bank stabilization, maintain healthy channel geometry, and provide cold water to a critical reach of the Big Hole River.

Amount Requested: \$4,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$4,000) but require the applicant to provide additional detail regarding the budget and additional costs.

Project Representative: Michael Bias

Discussion Items:

- The fence will be 60 feet away from the stream, out of the high water mark.
- A portion of the 1.1-mile fence will be a jackleg fence, for aesthetic reasons.
- The budget is based on previous projects actual costs; no actual bids were included.
- Michelle will review the re-submitted budget to make sure it is adequate before any funds are released.
- There is no grazing plan, and the property is considered a hobby ranch. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program may be able to help with grazing.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommendation, but add the requirement of providing additional budget detail. Additionally, the award would be reduced if the bid comes in below \$18,000 (proportionally) and will not exceed \$4,000.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$4,000 with conditions

- 2) **Bostwick Creek fish barrier** (019-2016). Bostwick Creek (Gallatin County) is a tributary to Trout Creek and the East Gallatin River near Bozeman that currently supports populations of Brook Trout, hybrid (Westslope X Rainbow) trout, and pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT). Two years ago, pure WCT were moved from Bostwick Creek to Placer Creek, also within the Gallatin watershed. Bostwick Creek likely still holds a number of pure WCT. The applicant proposes to modify an existing weir structure to build a concrete fish barrier and isolate WCT from non-native fish species. After barrier construction, the biologist would perform fish removals upstream of the barrier for 2-3 years using intensive electrofishing methods. The goal is to retain only pure WCT upstream of the barrier and preserve the native population. This project was funded for the amount of \$5,000 in the Winter 2016 funding cycle, used as seed money (002-2016).

Amount Requested: \$58,520

FWP Recommendation: We recommend funding this project at 50% of the total cost, minus the \$5,000 previously allocated, or \$41,666. Total FFIP funding would be \$46,666.

Project Representative: David Moser

Discussion Items:

- There is currently no dollar or percentage limit on how Future Fisheries can fund projects. The amount that Future Fisheries should contribute, the match, and the importance of preserving native species was discussed.
- The project is located on private land.
- The affect on aquatic invertebrates is minimal.
- Population surveys are done by electrofishing.

Motion: Motion to approve the amount of \$53,520 (\$5,000 was previously approved for the project).

Motion Made by: Michael Johns
Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby
Panel Action: Approved 12-1-1

- No-Terry Chute
- Abstain-Jed Hinkle

Amount Approved: \$53,520

****THIS PROJECT WAS WITHDRAWN BY THE APPLICANT ON 7/13/2016****

- 3) **Elk Springs Creek habitat restoration** (020-2016). Elk Springs Creek (Beaverhead County) is located in the Centennial Valley and flows into Upper Red Rock Lake. The stream was historically populated by Arctic grayling, and was one of Montana's most prolific Arctic grayling spawning populations. In the early 1900's, the stream was altered and habitat was fragmented and degraded, leading to the diversion of Elk Springs Creek into a shallow wetland marsh. The stream was reconnected to Upper Red Rock Lake in 2016 as part of a separate, but related, project. The intent of the project is to improve grayling populations by improving connectivity, restoring stream function, and improving suitable spawning areas. The project would remove sediment deposited by McDonald Pond, import spawning gravels where needed, and restore natural channel dimensions and sinuosity to the stream. Because of this project, Elk Springs Creek could be an additional major spawning tributary for Arctic grayling.

Amount Requested: \$45,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$45,000).

Project Representative: Matt Jaeger

Discussion Items:

- There is monitoring/baseline data on the grayling population.
- There were concerns about narrowing the channel, including the potential risk of failure. On the other side, because it is a spring creek system, it may not see a high amount of scour. The risk/reward potential was discussed. Chuck Dalby may discuss the design with Matt Jaeger after the meeting.
- Monitoring was discussed. A population estimate is available, graduate student pre-project data is being collected now, and the graduate student will evaluate the response. There is also an adaptive management plan.
- A panel member mentioned that the highway department should be consulted.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommendation of \$45,000.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Karen Boyd

Panel Action: Approved 13-1-0

- No - Chuck Dalby

Amount Approved: \$45,000

- 4) **Marias River Sanford Park fish habitat enhancement** (021-2016). The Marias River (Liberty County) is located in north central Montana and is impounded by Tiber dam. Wild Brown Trout, stocked Rainbow Trout, and Burbot are located within the project area, approximately one mile downstream of Tiber dam. This project would restore approximately 360 feet of eroding bank

with a 3-tiered willow soil lift, re-grade an additional 40 feet of bank to improve stability, and add two engineered log jams to provide trout habitat through pool scour and cover. The goal is to provide trout habitat and prevent further erosion. The project is located at a public campground. A second goal of the project is to stabilize the bank so that high flow dam releases, which are necessary for pallid sturgeon recovery, are possible and do not lead to further bank erosion.

Amount Requested: \$15,075

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$15,075).

Project Representative: Anne Tews and Jonathan Ferree (on phone)

Discussion Items:

- The benefits of the project were discussed, including the level of habitat it would provide for brown trout and pallid sturgeon.
- Discussion of the purpose of the project: if it's bank stabilization (protect the Bureau of Reclamation [BOR] campground from bank erosion), stream restoration, or a combination.
- Can the BOR keep releases low to establish treatment? Yes.
- There were questions regarding designs for the engineered log jams, and Jonathan Ferree expanded on the plans.
- There was concern over the use of a fascine toe and making sure that the toe is stable.
- Some panel members felt the BOR could contribute additional funding to the project.
- The matching fund amount was incorrect in the FWP recommendations handout.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommended funding of \$15,075.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Terry Chute

Panel Action: Approved 8-4-0

- No-Karin Boyd, Terry Chute, Jeff Hinkle, Jedediah Hinkle

Amount Approved: \$15,075

- 5) **Monture and Dunham Creeks riparian fencing** (022-2016). Monture Creek (Powell County) is a tributary to the middle Blackfoot River originating in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Dunham Creek is a tributary to Monture Creek. Both streams are bull trout core areas, listed as critical bull trout habitat, and support spawning areas for fluvial Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout. Dunham Creek also supports pure populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This project occurs on private land on the lower reaches of Monture and Dunham Creeks, within the Two-Creek Ranch. A portion of the riparian area in the project area was included in a previous grazing management system (including the bull trout spawning reaches) but the existing fence is no longer functional. This project would replace old fence and install new fence to protect two miles of Dunham Creek and eight miles of Monture Creek. Three-strand electric fence would be used in areas of higher use, and single-strand electric would be used in lower pressure areas. The intent is to protect critical native fish habitat and ensure recruitment potential for wild populations. Although an FWP letter of support was not included, the fisheries biologist supports the project and believes that this location could be the most critical bull trout spawning area in the Blackfoot.

Amount Requested: \$10,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$10,000) but would require the applicant address the following concerns: 1) It is difficult to see the location of the streams relative to the fencing on the provided map. What keeps the cattle off the stream on the east side, downstream of the bridge? 2) Please describe the operation and maintenance expected from the new fence. Does the landowner understand/agree to the terms?

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker

Discussion Items:

- This fence would replace a 20+ year old fence. The landowner will help remove the old fencing and maintain the replacement.
- The landowner is contributing funds and the cost of the fencing is appropriate.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommended funding of \$10,000.

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Alan Johnstone

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$10,000

- 6) **Mulherin Creek fish screen** (023-2016). Mulherin Creek (Park County) is a tributary to the Yellowstone River and the third greatest producer of Yellowstone cutthroat fry to the Yellowstone River. Trapping data indicated that a substantial portion of outmigrating fry are entrained in the canal. Spawning adults have also been found in the canal or irrigated fields. A fish screen was installed in the 1990's at this location, but failed because a clogged infiltration gallery led to a water user cutting the pipe to ensure water delivery. This project proposes to install a more functional, low-maintenance fish screen (Farmer's fish screen) to stop entrainment of Yellowstone cutthroat trout while allowing for delivery of diverted water. This project was partially funded previously (\$20,000; 011-2015) and the applicant was asked to obtain additional matching funds. The applicant also agreed to incorporate strong language into the agreement regarding the consequences of a vandalized fish screen.

Amount Requested: \$13,550

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$13,550) but require the applicant to re-submit the budget with accurate and more specific descriptions. We also would require that the agreement clearly state that the maintenance, repairs, and associated costs will be the responsibility of the water users.

Project Representative: Carol Endicott (on phone)

Discussion Items:

- The other sources of funding for the project are secured.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommended funding of \$13,550 but need the budget resubmitted and maintenance requirements described in the agreement.

Motion Made by: Nancy Winslow

Motion Second by: Jed Hinkle

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$13,550 with conditions

- 7) **North Fork Spanish Creek fish barrier** (024-2016). North Fork Spanish Creek (Gallatin County) located on property owned by Turner Enterprises, Inc. aims to restore Westslope

Cutthroat Trout (WCT) to previously 12 miles of historical stream habitat and 9 acres of high mountain lake habitat. The project would install a fish barrier on North Fork Spanish Creek, and use piscicides to remove non-native brook trout and hybridized WCT. The habitat will be re-colonized with fish from “nearest neighbor” WCT populations within the Madison or Gallatin drainage. This project would increase the miles of stream supporting WCT in the Gallatin River drainage by at least threefold and greatly reduce the risk of extinction of WCT in this area.

Amount Requested: \$60,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$60,000) if the applicant can show, through a revised budget sheet, that the matching contributions do not equal the total project cost. We also require that the budget sheet show detailed construction costs (lump sum is not acceptable).

Project Representative: Dave Moser

Discussion Items:

- FWP will need to seek legislative approval to participate in the project if the project is more than \$150K. If the applicant decides to be the owner of the project, this would not be required. Other funds are pending.
- Construction would begin next year.
- There is more public access on North Fork Spanish Creek than Cherry Creek.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommended funding of \$60,000 with the condition that the applicant submits a revised budget sheet that is reviewed and approved by Michelle McGree before funding is released.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Terry Chute

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-1

Abstain-Jed Hinkle

Amount Approved: \$60,000 with conditions

- 8) **Rattlesnake Creek Williams fish screen** (025-2016). Rattlesnake Creek (Missoula County) is a tributary to the Clark Fork River that is a primary spawning tributary for both native Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout, as well as fluvial rainbow and brown trout. Rattlesnake Creek has several ditches, most of which were screened in 2002 (FFIP 022-2002) with brencaill-type screens. The brencaill screen on the Williams ditch is undersized and does not function as intended; this project would replace the brencaill-type with a coanda-type fish screen. A coanda-type fish screen was installed on a previously unscreened ditch of Rattlesnake Creek in 2015 (FFIP 034-2015). The intent of the project is to prevent fish entrainment and increase spawning habitat for salmonids in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage.

Amount Requested: \$10,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial funding (\$9,600) as oversight is not an allowable Program cost. We request that the applicant more thoroughly describe the operation and maintenance commitment required and the responsibility taken by all water users and the applicant. Because the water users are not contributing either in-kind or monetarily, their active participation in the long-term project obligation is both expected and critical.

Project Representative: Rob Roberts

Discussion Items:

- The water users will monitor and maintain the screen.

Motion: Motion to approve the recommended FWP amount of \$10,000 with the condition that the applicants provide clarification on the maintenance responsibilities by the water users on the project. Michelle McGree can release the funds once she receives adequate documentation (the agreements).

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$9,600 with conditions

- 9) **Shanley Creek fish screen and water conservation** (026-2016). Shanley Creek (Missoula County) is a tributary to Cottonwood Creek in the Blackfoot River drainage. It is a Bull Trout core area stream and supports pure populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT). Several other projects have been completed in Shanley Creek, including road decommissioning and stream crossing upgrades on the University of Montana Bandy Experimental Ranch in 2015 (FFIP 014-2015). This project would also take place on the UM Bandy Ranch and would replace a paddlewheel fish screen that is no longer functional. The fish screen would be replaced with a flat panel screen. The goal of the project is to eliminate fish entrainment and improve control of diverted stream flow. Although an FWP letter of support was not provided, the fish biologist supports the project, as the fish screen installation shifted the fish community to favor WCT.

Amount Requested: \$15,250

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$15,250). We strongly encourage the Bandy Ranch to improve grazing management.

Project Representative: Ryan Neudecker

Discussion Items:

- There will be new ranch managers in the near future.
- This is a vertical flat plate stream, similar to the one being replaced.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommendation of \$15,250.

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$15,250

- 10) **Shields River watershed YCT passage** (027-2016). This project takes place in the Upper Shields River watershed, specifically Buck Creek and Lodgepole Creek (Park County) above Crandall Creek. This area is rated as the highest priority for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) habitat because rainbow trout are not yet present, it is publicly owned land, habitat is in good condition, and the threat of brook trout can be eliminated. This project ties into other work in the area, including installation of a fish barrier to isolate YCT habitat (partially funded by FFIP in 2014; 008-2014). This project would construct two bottomless pipe arches, on Buck Creek and Lodgepole Creek, to restore full passage for aquatic organisms. The goal is to improve fish passage and, in combination with other projects, reconnect 28 stream miles above the Shields River fish barrier. This extensive habitat would be used for YCT conservation.

Amount Requested: \$57,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$57,000) if the applicant resubmits a budget, complete with itemized and described costs. A budget without items, units, or descriptions is unacceptable.

Project Representative: Clint Sestrich (on phone)

Discussion Items:

- There are no culvert designs with the applications, but the estimated costs are within the normal range for these types of projects.
- There is some urgency, as the Shields River is a Yellowstone cutthroat trout stronghold. It is cooler and has more climate resistance.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommended amount of \$57,000. This is contingent on the applicant submitting a revised budget to Michelle McGree.

Motion Made by: Alan Johnstone

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-1

- Abstain-Jed Hinkle

Amount Approved: \$57,000 with conditions

11) Wasson Creek water rights lease renewal (028-2016). Wasson Creek (Powell County) is a tributary to Nevada Spring Creek in the Blackfoot River drainage. Historically, Wasson Creek was habitat for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) and upper Wasson Creek hosts an isolated population of pure-strain Westslope Cutthroat Trout. However, irrigation on lower Wasson Creek dewatered the creek and the WCT were largely isolated from the rest of the drainage. High temperatures and lack of flow represented barriers to migration in and out of Wasson Creek. The instream flow lease achieved in 2007 led to a substantial success—in both reduced water temperature and increased numbers of WCT. Monitoring has also shown an increase in migration and spawning activity. This project intends to renew the instream flow lease and continue the success in restoration for another ten years. Although a FWP letter of support was not provided, the local fish biologist supports the project.

Amount Requested: \$20,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$20,000).

Project Representative: Stan Bradshaw

Discussion Items:

- The applicant described the process of determining the of the water lease, which included reimbursement for the lost production as well as additional weed control.

Motion: Motion to approve the FWP recommendation of \$20,000.

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Approved 14-0-0

Amount Approved: \$20,000

Final Panel Business:

- The budgets, in light of recommended funding, were reviewed and the Review Panel decided to maintain their current recommendations. If approved, there would be \$132,685.13 remaining for the Winter 2017 funding cycle.
- Terry Chute was selected to take part in the project ranking process.
- The Winter 2017 grant meeting was scheduled for December 15th, 2016 in Helena.
- The panel discussed future strategies for funding projects. Dividing funds amongst grant cycles was proposed, as well as continuing the current process of funding projects as the Panel sees fit. Michelle McGree will analyze past data on requests and timing of the cycle and a determination will be made at the next meeting or in the next biennium.
- Michelle McGree will revise the ranking criteria and panel guidance to improve the review process and consistency, particularly for new members. She will see how much work is required before determining if a sub-committee should be formed.
- Poor budgets and applications were discussed, and it was determined that applications that are incomplete (do not fill out all of the questions) should be deemed invalid and budgets must be complete to be eligible for funding. Michelle will add language to the applications and website and provide guidance on what is required for budgets to be complete. Additional guidance will make the line between eligible and ineligible easier to determine.
- Travel and per diem was discussed and forms were distributed.

Adjourn